FBI Contacts With Oswald, Ruby Sifted by House

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Washington — A House subcommittee has opened an investigation into the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) relationship with Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby before President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

This is the first official public inquiry by Congress into whether evidence was withheld from the Warren Commission since it reported in 1964 that Oswald was the sole assassin.

Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., chairman of the Civil and Constitutional Rights subcommittee, said Monday the purpose of his panel's investigation "is not to reopen the Warren Commission, others may later decide to do that, but to set the record straight on just what went on."

Edwards said that several recent reports about the FBI's role before the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963, had convinced members of the subcommittee that the matter required investigation. Edward's subcommitee, which has oversight responsibilities for the FBI, has been conducting an investigation into the bureau's operations.

He said that the subcommittee had scheduled public hearings for next week and had asked senior FBI officials to testify under oath. It may later subpoena FBI field agents involved in various phases of the case, he added.

He said that the committeee would concentrate on the following three main areas in its initial investigation:

- The disclosure that the FBI, possibly on orders from its then director, J. Edgar Hoover, destroyed a letter written by Oswald several days before the assassination in which he threatened to "blow up" a Dallas police station unless the bureau's agents stopped trying to interview him.
- Recently uncovered documents that indicated that Jack Ruby, the man who killed Oswald in the Dallas police headquarters, was a paid informant for the FBI.

The charge by William Walter, a former code clerk in the New Orleans FBI field office, that the bureau warned its Southern field offices five days before Kennedy's death that there would be an assassination attempt with a rifle in Dallas. This has been denied by Walter's superiors and he has not substantiated the claim.

The House committee's investigation is only one of several reappraisals of Kennedy assassination evidence. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligance appointed two of its members, Sens. Richard S. Schweiker, R.-Pa., and Gary Hart, D.-Colo., to be an informal subcommittee and screen possible new evidence.

The Senate committee has a broader mandate than does Edward's panel. It can gather evidence on Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) activities as well as FBI materials. Based upon what Schweiker already learned as a member of the intelligence committee, he called last month for the Warren Commission's inquiry to be reopened.

Among the matters believed to warrant reexamination was the disclosure that the CIA had never told the Warren Commission that it was involved in attempts to kill Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba. Considering Oswald's deep involvement with Cuban elements, Schweiker has said that it would appear this information might be pertinent to the Warren inquiry.

The events surrounding the destruction of the Oswald letter by the FBI are under investigation both within the bureau and by the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice.

Though the Oswald letter was delivered to the FBI before Kennedy was shot, law enforcement sources have said, the bureau apparently did not tell anyone about the threat.

After the President was killed, the Oswald letter was removed from the file and destroyed. Several sources have said the destruction may have been on Hoover's orders, but this is still under investigation.